RETHINKING INSURGENCY

Steven Metz

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FOREWORD

The U.S. military and national security community lost interest in insurgency after the end of the Cold War. Other defense issues such as multinational peacekeeping and transformation seemed more pressing and thus attracted the most attention. But with the onset of the Global War on Terror in 2001 and the ensuing involvement of the U.S. military in counterinsurgency support in Iraq and Afghanistan, insurgency experienced renewed concern in both the defense and intelligence communities.

In this monograph, Dr. Steven Metz, who has been writing on insurgency and counterinsurgency for more than 2 decades, argues that this relearning process, while exceptionally important, emphasized the wrong thing, focusing on Cold War era nationalistic insurgencies rather than the complex conflicts which characterized the post-Cold War security environment. To be successful at counterinsurgency, he contends, the U.S. military and defense community must rethink insurgency. This has profound implications for American strategy and military doctrine.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as part of its efforts to help military and defense leaders understand the difficult security challenges faced by the United States.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
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STEVEN METZ is Chairman of the Regional Strategy and Planning Department and Research Professor of National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI). He has been with SSI since 1993, previously serving as Henry L. Stimson Professor of Military Studies and SSI's Director of Research. Dr. Metz has also been on the faculty of the Air War College, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and several universities. He has been an advisor to political campaigns and elements of the intelligence community; served on security policy task forces; testified in both houses of Congress; and spoken on military and security issues around the world. He is the author of more than 100 publications on national security, military strategy, and world politics. His most recent study from the Strategic Studies Institute was *Learning from Iraq: Counterinsurgency in American Strategy*. He serves on the RAND Corporation Insurgency Board and is working on two books: *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy* and *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century*. Dr. Metz holds a B.A. in Philosophy and an M.A. in International Studies from the University of South Carolina, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Johns Hopkins University.

SUMMARY

The September 11, 2001, attacks and Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM revived the idea that insurgency is a significant threat to the United States. In response, the American military and defense communities began to rethink insurgency. Much of this valuable work, though, viewed contemporary insurgency as more closely related to Cold War era insurgencies than to the complex conflicts which characterized the post-Cold War period. This suggests that the most basic way that the military and defense communities think about insurgency must be rethought.

Contemporary insurgency has a different strategic context, structure, and dynamics than its forebears. Insurgencies tend to be nested in complex conflicts which involve what can be called third forces (armed groups which affect the outcome, such as militias) and fourth forces (unarmed groups which affect the outcome, such as international media), as well as the insurgents and the regime. Because of globalization, the decline of overt state sponsorship of insurgency, the continuing importance of informal outside sponsorship, and the nesting of insurgency within complex conflicts associated with state weakness or failure, the dynamics of contemporary insurgency are more like a violent and competitive market than war in the traditional sense where clear and discrete combatants seek strategic victory.

This suggests a very different way of thinking about (and undertaking) *counter*insurgency. At the strategic level, the risk to the United States is not that insurgents will "win" in the traditional sense, take

over their country, and shift it from a partner to an enemy. It is that complex internal conflicts, especially ones involving insurgency, will generate other adverse effects: the destabilization of regions, resource flows, and markets; the blossoming of transnational crime; humanitarian disasters; transnational terrorism; and so forth. Given this, the U.S. goal should not automatically be the defeat of the insurgents by the regime (which may be impossible and which the regime may not even want), but the most rapid conflict resolution possible. In other words, a quick and sustainable resolution which integrates insurgents into the national power structure is less damaging to U.S. national interests than a protracted conflict which leads to the complete destruction of the insurgents. Protracted conflict, not insurgent victory, is the threat.

If, in fact, insurgency is not simply a variant of war, if the real threat is the deleterious effects of sustained conflict, and if it is part of systemic failure and pathology in which key elites and organizations develop a vested interest in sustaining the conflict, the objective of counterinsurgency support should *not* be simply strengthening the government so that it can impose its will more effectively on the insurgents, but systemic reengineering. This, in turn, implies that the most effective posture for outsiders is not to be an ally of the government and thus a sustainer of the flawed socio-political-economic system, but to be neutral mediators and peacekeepers (even when the outsiders have much more ideological affinity for the regime than for the insurgents). If this is true, the United States should only undertake counterinsurgency support in the most pressing instances and as part of an equitable, legitimate, and broad-based multinational coalition.

American strategy for counterinsurgency should recognize three distinct insurgency settings each demanding a different response:

- A functioning government with at least some degree of legitimacy is suffering from an erosion of effectiveness but can be "redeemed" through assistance provided according to the Foreign Internal Defense doctrine.

- There is no functioning and legitimate government, but a broad international and regional consensus supports the creation of a neo-trusteeship. In such instances, the United States should provide military, economic, and political support as part of a multinational consensus operating under the authority of the United Nations.

- There is no functioning and legitimate government and no international or regional consensus for the formation of a neo-trusteeship. In these cases, the United States should pursue containment of the conflict by support to regional states and, in conjunction with partners, help create humanitarian "safe zones" within the conflictive state.

RETHINKING INSURGENCY

. . . everything old is new again . . .

Peter Allen

INTRODUCTION

Military thinkers often say that the *essence* of war does not change.[1] War is and always will be the use of violence for political purposes. It is always characterized by what Clausewitz described as "fog" (factors which complicate decisionmaking and force strategists to rely on assumptions), "friction" (the tendency of everything to operate less efficiently than in peacetime), and the "trinity" of rationality, passion, and chance. But, military theorists note, war's *nature* or *character* does change. Linear formations gave way to loose ones, columns and rows to swarming by battalions and brigades; human and animal power were replaced by mechanization; handwritten and personal communications by email; limited, seasonal operations gave way to global power projection.

Insurgency also combines continuity and change, an enduring essence and a shifting nature. Its essence is protracted, asymmetric violence; political, legal, and ethical ambiguity; and the use of complex terrain, psychological warfare, and political mobilization. It arises when a group decides that the gap between their political expectations and the opportunities afforded them is unacceptable and can only be remedied by force. Insurgents avoid battlespaces where they are at a disadvantage—often the conventional military sphere—and focus on those where they can attain parity, particularly the psychological and the political.[2]

They seek to postpone decisive action, avoid defeat, sustain themselves, expand their support, and alter the power balance in their favor. And because insurgency involves a layered psychological complexity, multiple audiences, and a range of participants with different methods and objectives, it is imbued with what Edward Luttwak called a "paradoxical logic"—what initially appears best may not be, and every positive action has negative implications as well.[3]

But while insurgency's essence persists, its nature changes. That we know. The precise direction, extent, and implications of the evolution, though, are not yet clear. We cannot yet tell which changes will have only limited significance and which will prove profound, which changes are case-specific and which universal. But we need to. From the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s until 2001, the U.S. military and defense community paid scant attention to insurgency and counterinsurgency. It faded from the curricula of professional military education. There was little interest in developing new doctrine, operational concepts, or organizations. The general sense seemed to be that American involvement in counterinsurgency was a Cold War phenomenon, irrelevant with the demise of the Soviet Union and the mellowing of China. But the September 11, 2001, attacks and Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM changed that. Once again, insurgency was seen as a significant threat and counterinsurgency a strategic imperative. In response, the American military and defense community began to rethink insurgency. Or, more accurately, it revived the old idea with a few added twists.

During the 1970s, American national security strategy was shaped by what became known as the "Vietnam syndrome." The disastrous outcome of

the war in Southeast Asia made Americans reluctant to intervene in Third World conflicts. Americans, it seemed, were ill-suited for participation in morally ambiguous, complex, and protracted armed struggles, particularly outside the nation's traditional geographic area of concern. Better to eschew them than to become embroiled in "another Vietnam." Ironically, even though the United States eventually overcame this variant of the Vietnam syndrome, a new one emerged. When insurgency and counterinsurgency again became important elements of the global security system and American strategy after 2001, many American policymakers, political leaders, and defense strategists used Vietnam as a model. The Viet Cong were treated as the archetypal insurgency. Insurgents who did not use the Maoist strategy stood little chance of success (defined as seizing the state and becoming the new regime).[4] The tendency was to seek new ideas from old conflicts, preparing, as so often happens, to fight the last war. But contemporary insurgencies are, in many ways, more like the complex internal conflicts of the 1990s than the insurgencies of the mid-20th century. This suggests that the military and the defense analytical community must rethink the insurgency problem once again.

THE OLD CONCEPTUALIZATION

American thinking about insurgency was forged in the Cold War. Washington's concern was that insurgents linked to the Soviet Union or China would overthrow friendly regimes, then become communist allies or proxies. The key idea was the "death by a thousand small cuts"—while any given insurgency might not pose a mortal danger, a series of them would. As the

Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy wrote in 1988, insurgencies and other Third World conflicts "have an adverse cumulative effect on U.S. access to critical regions, on American credibility among allies and friends, and on American self-confidence. If this cumulative effect cannot be checked or reversed in the future, it will gradually undermine America's ability to defend its interests in the most vital regions . . ."[5] The threat from insurgency, then, was indirect and symbolic.

As communist-backed insurgencies flared throughout Asia, Africa, and South America, President John Kennedy directed the U.S. military to augment its counterinsurgency capabilities. By emphasizing the military dimension, Kennedy institutionalized the notion that insurgency is a form of war. This relatively simple idea had profound implications. If insurgency was, in fact, war, then the way that Americans thought about war more generally could be extrapolated to counterinsurgency. Insurgency, like conventional war, was seen as a struggle in which two antagonists sought to impose their will on each other. Insurgency, like war, was abnormal and episodic, with a clear beginning and end. The defeat of the enemy and a return to peace was the objective. As in conventional war, diplomatic, political, economic, psychological, and intelligence activities supported military efforts. Counterinsurgency thus became the primary responsibility of the military.

As Americans better understood insurgency, they concluded that most insurgents had valid political and economic grievances. This suggested a dual track approach to counterinsurgency, simultaneously seeking to defeat or eradicate the insurgents themselves while altering the factors which cause grievance.

According to 1990 U.S. Army and Air Force doctrine, insurgents assume "that appropriate change within the existing system is not possible or likely."[6] While it was seldom stated bluntly in strategy or doctrine, only deeply flawed states—those with serious inequities, repression, or corruption—gave rise to major insurgencies. To address these flaws, most insurgents (or at least those of the greatest concern to the United States) sought to overthrow the existing state, rule the nation themselves, and launch a revolutionary transformation. Even though scholars such as Bard O'Neill reminded Americans that not all insurgencies were revolutionary, revolutionary ones posed the greatest threat to U.S. national interests and thus dominated American thinking.[7] Hence Joint Doctrine defined insurgency as "An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict."[8] More recent Army/Marine Corps doctrine described it more broadly as "an organized, protracted struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control."[9]

Based on the Cold War experience, U.S. military doctrine viewed insurgency as a "stand alone" struggle. It had "specific causes and beginnings" and "arises when the government is unable or unwilling to redress the demands of important social groups and these opponents band together and begin to use violence to change the government's position."[10] Insurgency, like conventional war, involved two antagonists (the regime and the insurgents). Insurgents and counterinsurgents engaged in direct action against each other while simultaneously attempting to win the

support of "undecideds"—the public within their state or potential external supporters. Insurgents needed "the active support of a plurality of the politically active people and the passive acquiescence of the majority."[11] If the government obtained the support of most of "the people," it attained "legitimacy" and thus "won." Failure to do this could lead to an insurgent victory. "Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies," Army/Marine Corps doctrine states, so "each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate."[12]

The most successful insurgencies were ones which became more and more "state like," controlling ever larger swaths of territory and expanding their military capability to the point that they could undertake larger operations. They developed organizational specialization and complexity with separate leaders, combatants, political cadre, auxiliaries, and a mass base. U.S. thinking tended to gravitate to the Maoist insurgent strategy of "people's war" which held that the rebels sought the internal formality and differentiation of a state. Insurgency, in other words, began as an asymmetric conflict but became less so as it progressed.

The American notion of *counter*insurgency rejected the brutal "mailed fist" approach used throughout history in favor of methods more amenable to a democracy.[13] Derived from British, French, and American experience in "small wars," this stressed simultaneous actions to neutralize or destroy insurgent armed formations, separate the insurgents from "the people," and undertake political-economic reform. The American approach was to support a partner government, strengthening it and encouraging it to reform. This was done through a

program called "foreign internal defense" (FID) which "promotes regional stability by supporting a host-nation program of internal defense and development (IDAD). These national programs free and protect a nation from lawlessness, subversion, and insurgency by emphasizing the building of viable institutions that respond to the needs of society."[14] Strengthening or restrengthening national governments was the key. Strategically, U.S. involvement began at a low level, escalated until the partner state could stand on its own and had institutionalized political and economic reform, then receded once the insurgents were defeated and the government controlled its territory.

RETHINKING THE CONTEXT

This is where we were. But where should we be? How should we understand insurgency in the first decade of the 21st century? A broad rethinking of the problem must begin with the strategic context. In the old conceptualization, insurgencies mattered to the United States when they augmented Soviet or Soviet bloc influence. But there was also an element of symbolism. American policymakers believe that the strategic *zeitgeist*—the spirit of an era—matters. Successful insurgencies, they thought, would make insurgency attractive to others, creating a climate where the violent overthrow of the existing order was acceptable, even laudable; hence the "myth of the insurgent" that gave them prestige within their own societies and even in the West.

Insurgency matters today because it is linked to the phenomenon of transnational terrorism. Insurgents have long used terrorism in the operational sense, deterring those who supported the government and

creating an environment of violence and insecurity to erode public trust in the regime. But now terrorism plays a strategic role as well. Insurgents can use terrorism as a form of long-range power projection against outsiders who support the government they are fighting. This could deter or even end outside assistance. It is easy to imagine, for instance, that the already fragile backing for American involvement in Iraq would erode even further if the Iraqi insurgents launched attacks in the United States. Even more important, an insurgent movement able to seize control of a state could support transnational terrorists. The idea is that insurgents have demonstrated an affinity for violence and extremism which would flavor their policies if they came to power.

Of course, not all insurgencies are directly linked to broader transnational movements. For the United States, though, association with (or at least a similarity to) violent Islamic extremism (or narcotrafficking) determines the strategic significance of an insurgency. While not itself an insurgent movement in the purest sense, al Qaeda cultivates ties to and supports insurgencies which share its ideology and world view.[15] Even insurgencies not directly linked to Islamic extremism strengthen it by spawning underground networks and economies which transnational terrorists can then tap. Hezbollah and al Qaeda, for instance, have been linked to the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia via the diamond trade.[16] In 2005 Rady Zaiter, a Lebanese citizen, was arrested in connection with a cocaine smuggling operation that sent most of its profits to Hezbollah.[17]

Still, this idea that association with Islamic extremism determines the strategic significance of an insurgency needs refinement. Does the assumption

that a regime that came to power via insurgency will support transnational terrorism make sense? Perhaps, particularly if transnational terrorists directly contributed to the insurgent cause (as in Iraq). In such cases, the new regime might feel a moral obligation to support its former allies. But it is even more likely that a regime born out of insurgency would be focused inward, concentrating on consolidating power. In this era of globalization and interconnectedness, new regimes are particularly vulnerable to outside economic and military pressure and thus unlikely to undertake actions which would give the United States or some other state a justification for intervention. Even if the Iraqi or Afghan insurgents won, for instance, they would probably have learned the lessons of 2001—serving as a host to transnational terrorists is a dangerous business. While radicals can question America's ability to sustain counterinsurgency, there is no doubt that the United States can (and will) overturn regimes which overtly support transnational terrorism.

It is less the chance of an insurgent *victory* which creates a friendly environment for transnational terrorism than persistent internal conflict shattering control and restraint in a state. During an insurgency, both the insurgents and the government focus on each other, necessarily leaving parts of the country with minimal security and control. Transnational terrorists exploit this. And protracted insurgency creates a general disregard for law and order. Organized crime and corruption blossom. Much of the population loses its natural aversion to violence. Thus a society brutalized and wounded by a protracted insurgency is more likely to spawn a variety of evils, spewing violent individuals into the world long after the conflict ends.

The strategic context for 20th century insurgency was the political mobilization of excluded groups, rising nationalism, and proxy conflict between the superpowers. The strategic context of contemporary insurgency is the collapse of old methods of order and identity leading to systemic weakness and pathology. This creates failure or shortfalls in the security domain. One of the dominant characteristics of the contemporary global security environment is that it continues to give nation states responsibility for systemic maintenance and stability at the very time that they are increasingly incapable of providing acceptable levels of security, prosperity, and political identity. A variety of sub- and supra-state organizations are filling the vacuum.

There are several reasons that states—particularly in Latin America, Africa, and Asia—cannot meet the demands of their citizens. In part, it flows from the artificiality of many of today's national borders. Many do not reflect political, economic, or social distinctions on the ground. Artificial and increasingly fragile states are pummeled by globalization, interconnectedness, and the profusion of information. Globalization and information profusion make it difficult for states to manage the distribution of goods and power within their borders and expectations. To give a simple example, access to the Internet and satellite television raises awareness in poor regions, but the globalization of capital and markets makes it difficult for states to improve economic conditions rapidly enough to match demands. Expectations rise more quickly than the ability to meet them. This alone does not lead to armed conflict, but can if energized by ideology. Metaphorically, globalization is like chronic stress to a human body—stress alone does not kill, but it can make the body less able to stave off pathogens which

can, in fact, kill. The effect is amplified in bodies that are already weakened by something else. Globalization makes weak states more vulnerable to ideologies of violence.

Another unintended side effect of globalization arises from the pressure on autocratic regimes to undertake political reform (or at least give the impression of undertaking political reform). Regimes must do this because the global capital market "punishes" autocrats—unless an autocratic regime controls one of the handful of extremely valuable resources such as petroleum, the global capital market assumes that investment is a high risk. Thomas Friedman calls this the "golden straitjacket"—regimes are forced to undertake actions which weaken them in order to gain access to global capital flows.[18] But "hybrid" states— part autocracy, part democracy—are more prone to political conflict than either strong autocracies or strong democracies.[19] So autocratic regimes which undertake limited reforms to attract investment inadvertently make themselves more prone to political conflict.

Most of today's armed conflicts—including those involving insurgency—grow from attempts to exert influence in or derive benefits from the "space" vacated by the weakening of the state (or never adequately filled by states in the first place). In addition, there is competition and sometimes conflict over a weakly controlled but increasingly important "space"—the infosphere. Twentieth century insurgency sought to eject the state from space it controlled (usually physical territory). Contemporary insurgency is a competition for uncontrolled spaces. Historically, it is more akin to the wars which took place at the peripheries of declining empires, be they the Roman, Ottoman, Chinese, or some other. Contemporary insurgency, then, is simply

one of many manifestations of declining state control and systemic weakness. It co-exists with many others, most importantly the rise of militias, powerful criminal gangs and syndicates, informal economies, the collapse of state services, humanitarian crises or disasters, crises of identity, and transnational terrorism.

This means insurgency is no longer a "stand alone" conflict; it is "nested" within deeper and broader struggles. It is still about power (as it was during the Cold War), but it is also about economics, services, and social identity. The other dimensions of the conflict and the other participants both effect the insurgency and are affected by it. Simply asking states to exert or re-exert control over increasingly uncontrolled spaces is inadequate.

RETHINKING THE STRUCTURE

The most common evolutionary path for 21st century organizations—be they corporations, political organizations, or something else—is to become less rigidly hierarchical, taking the form of decentralized networks or webs of nodes (which may themselves be hierarchical). Such organizations are most effective in a rapidly changing, information saturated environment.[20] Insurgent movements organized as "flat" networks or semi-networks are more flexible and adaptable than rigidly hierarchical ones. Resources, information, and decisionmaking authority are diffused. Such organizations are effective in environments where rapid adaptation is an advantage. In the contemporary era, polyglot organizations which combine a centralized, hierarchical dimension (which gives them task effectiveness) and a decentralized, networked dimension (which gives them flexibility and adaptability) can maximize mission effectiveness.

Decentralized, networked organizations also tend to be more survivable. No single node is vital. They may not have a "center of gravity." In the past, survivability and effectiveness tended to be inverse characteristics. The most survivable were the smallest and best hidden, while the most effective were the largest and most powerful. The profusion and diffusion of information alters this (at least to some degree) by amplifying the effects of psychological operations, whether violent or nonviolent, and in part by changing the power asymmetry between insurgencies and the state. When power was strictly a factor of tangible resources like money and troops, the state held a distinct advantage. But as information becomes power (or generates power), the asymmetry between states and other organizations declines. A decentralized, networked structure allows even small insurgencies to accumulate and use information-based power (such as terrorism) and thus remain viable. And with the decline of state sponsorship, violent groups like insurgencies must be self-financing. Globalization and the information revolution provide the means to do so. As Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman phrase it, "rapid economic globalization and the replacement of state-led economic development by market-driven free trade have created new and abundant opportunities for more systematic forms of combatant self-financing."[21] A decentralized network is better able to capitalize on shifting economic opportunities than a hierarchical one (although less able to harness the funds accumulated for the attainment of overarching objectives).

The need to generate their own resources and the absence of overt state sponsors forces insurgencies to develop a wide array of linkages, partnerships, and alliances.[22] Interconnectedness—both virtual and

tangible—allows this. Insurgents can use the Internet to find partners, whether ideological supporters who share a political perspective or business partners to provide information and armaments.[23] A complex web of links means less need for a mass base. Like their forebears, contemporary insurgents still seek acquiescence from the populace—an unwillingness to provide information to the regime. But they rely less on the general population for information, money, and labor. This allows them to devote fewer resources to "carrots" designed to develop a mass base—social programs, administration, patronage, and so forth—and more to "sticks" which generate passivity (but not active support). Twentieth century insurgencies, particularly those based on the Maoist model, sought to balance carrots and sticks. Contemporary insurgencies (like contemporary organized crime) are more focused on violence, on coercion rather than patronage.

Decentralized, networked insurgencies without an overt state sponsor have a limited ability to undertake conventional military operations (or other complex activities which require extensive coordination). This is one more factor leading to a greater reliance on terrorism. It is both necessary and effective. Information profusion and the availability of diverse means of communication amplify the psychological effects of terrorism. In terrorism, it matters less how many people were killed than how many people know of and are influenced by the deaths. The terrorism of contemporary insurgents is thus designed to influence both a proximate audience and a distant one.

Because contemporary insurgencies are nested within broader crises or conflicts reflecting the diffusion of power and information, a diverse array of participants influence the outcome. During the

Cold War, insurgencies involved what could be called "first" forces (the insurgents and counterinsurgents themselves) and often "second" forces—other states which supported either the insurgents or the counterinsurgents. Today, "third" and "fourth" forces are increasingly important. Third forces are armed elements other than the insurgents or counterinsurgents. Fourth forces are unarmed elements which affect and shape the conflict.

Third Forces.

Like insurgents, third forces form and survive when states are weak and unable to provide security. They play many roles in an insurgency: distracting the government from the counterinsurgency campaign, serving as a partner of the insurgents, performing functions the government cannot, or changing the basic dynamic and structure of the conflict. Three forms of third forces are particularly important for contemporary insurgencies: militias, criminal organizations, and private military companies.

Militias. Militias arise from a combination of need and opportunity. The state cannot address the basic needs of a specific group, particularly security, economic opportunity, and a basis for political identity. Colombia is a classic example, with a range of populist militias emerging as public order in the cities disintegrated.[24] Some were organized and financed directly by drug traffickers, others by local landowners, still others by military officers acting officially or unofficially.[25] Opportunity is the flip side of this: the state is too weak to prevent the emergence of militias. In Africa, for instance, militias are often the personal armed forces of powerful warlords whom the state cannot control. As William DeMars describes it:

> Warlord politics and state collapse are two sides of the same coin. State collapse means that the government no longer provides basic security and economic infrastructure as public goods. Behind this is a warlord political economy in which rival politicians fund patronage networks through access to international commercial ventures and provide their own security either by fielding their own militias or hiring international mercenaries.[26]

In a sense, then, militias may arise from *defensive* motives when a group faces a real threat, or they may arise *offensively* when a group or individual seeks to capitalize on the weakness of the state.

Militias have a subnational constituency and focus. They address the needs of a specific group that is something less than the entire citizenry of a country. They are "quasi-state" organizations, assuming some functions which the state would normally perform such as the provision of security, administration, and a range of activities designed to facilitate economic activity. Finally, militias have a coercive capability. They are, in other words, not simply subnational quasi-state organizations, but *armed* subnational quasi-state organizations. The coercive element may be only a small part of the militia's function, or it may be its core. But all militias have an armed component.

There are a number of variations within this basic construct. Some militias are based on personal patronage. In Congo-Brazzaville, for instance, the three major militia groups—the Ninja, Cobra, and Cocoye—are the private armies of powerful politicians (Denis Sassou Nguesso, Pascal Lissouba, and Bernard Kolelas).[27] Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) is the personal militia of Thomas Lubanga and Floribert Kisembo, and the Party for Unity and Safeguarding

of the Integrity of Congo is the private army of Chief Kahwa Mandro Kisembo.[28] Alternatively, militias can be based on group identity such as clan, ethnicity, or sect. These can range from relatively informal, part-time self defense organizations to highly formal, hierarchical, almost state-like entities with full-time members, extensive specialization, standing military units, an organic intelligence and counterintelligence capability, a system for strategic planning, and a chain of command. Militias may raise funds in a variety of ways, from legal contributions to illegal means (extortion, protection rackets, robbery, counterfeiting, product piracy, narcotrafficking, vice, smuggling, and kidnapping).

The line between militias and large-scale organized crime is often fuzzy (and sometimes irrelevant) but, in general, militias have some political objectives other than self-aggrandizement. They are both parasites and providers of a resource (security, patronage) whereas criminal organizations are purely parasitic. It is possible, though, for a given organization to straddle or cross the boundary between the two. Pablo Escobar, one of Colombia's leading narcotraffickers, provided social services and concocted a rudimentary populist political ideology. He donated funds for roads, electric lines, and soccer fields for the poor and built a housing project.[29] The inverse—a militia funding itself by crime—is even more common. Many of the communal militias in Iraq are involved in organized crime.[30] There are reports linking Hezbollah to an American crime syndicate and to diamond smuggling.[31]

Some militias do not behave strategically (identifying and prioritizing objectives; applying elements of power toward the attainment of the objectives; and balancing costs, risks, and expected gains). Others may

have formal processes of strategy development and adjustment, perhaps even full-time strategists. The more strategic a militia, the more effective it will be at attaining political objectives. A strategic militia is also likely to exhibit more "rational" behavior, opening itself to influence by other organizations which understand its objectives and strategy. Astrategic militias are more susceptible to fracturing (which may not necessarily destroy them since they may persist as small, autonomous militias).

Militias vary greatly in organizational complexity. Some, like Hezbollah, may be highly complex, with great internal specialization and formal methods for recruitment, training, indoctrination, and even professional development. They may have suborganizations for planning, intelligence and counterintelligence, financial activities, social services, and so forth. They are likely to offer "career" progression within the organization. Others, like some of the African militias, are closer to a gang in structure, with little organizational complexity other than a hierarchy of power and informal methods for recruitment, indoctrination, and training. Complex militias are likely to be more effective at attaining objectives. Simple ones are likely to be more resilient.

Some militias, like successful insurgencies, develop a coherent ideology based on a persuasive "narrative" which explains why they were formed, what they seek to do, who opposes them, the methods they will use, and why they consider this endeavor justified and legitimate. This narrative and the ideology it reflects normally form a part of the information operations used by the militia. Other militias are more primal, seeing no need to develop a coherent ideology (or having no capacity to do so). Ideological militias have

a better chance of developing active public support. Nonideological ones often rely on passive public support or patronage.

While all militias have an identified constituency, their relationship with it can range from the heavily parasitic—the militia draws resources from its constituency by relying on force and fear—to symbiotic ties where the militia, rather than the national government, is seen as the legitimate representative of the constituency. Parasitic militias are common in Africa, particularly in very weak states like the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[32] Hezbollah, by contrast, falls on the more legitimate end of the continuum.

Militias may be proxies or subordinates of a more powerful group, political party, or even the state. Others are autonomous. Some militias are extensively linked to other organizations, whether inside or outside the country. Both the quantity and depth of links matter. Other militias have few connections. Finally, militias vary greatly in the emphasis they place on violence. Some are violence-centric; others use it only as required. Generally, the more parasitic a militia, the more it relies on violence. The more legitimate a militia, the more it relies on its other elements of power.

Hezbollah is an example of a "high end" militia characterized by complexity, a strategic approach, legitimacy, deep and extensive linkages, and autonomy.[33] Some militias are created by states, some are born more "organically." Hezbollah was not only created by a state but by a foreign state. In 1982, a 1,500 member contingent of Iran's Revolutionary Guards arrived in Lebanon's Bekka Valley with the permission of the Syrian government.[34] Their objective was to spread Ayatollah Khomeini's version of Islamic revolution in the Arab world, using the affinity of Lebanon's Shi'ite community. This group had long

been peripheralized in Lebanese politics and, in 1982, was suffering the effects of Israel's invasion of Lebanon (intended to break the strength of the Palestinian movement operating from there.) The "raw material" for Hezbollah was "loosely organized bands of Shi'ite gunmen."[35] Iran poured money in, paying for military training centers and community services such as schools, clinics, hospitals, and cash subsidies to the poor.[36] This was particularly important since the national government provided little to the southern Shi'ites, including those displaced to the slums of Beirut by conflict in the south.

Khomeini and the other architects of the Iranian revolution had a powerful effect on the initial ideology and narrative of Hezbollah. As Sami Hajjar noted,

> Hizballah adheres to a Manichean notion of the world as being divided between oppressors (*mustakbirun*) and oppressed (*mustad'fin*). The relationship between the two groups is inherently antagonistic—a conflict between good and evil, right and wrong.[37]

The group's justifying narrative—which Adam Shatz described as "a fiery mixture of revolutionary Khomeinism, Shi'ite nationalism, celebration of martyrdom, and militant anti-Zionism, occasionally accompanied by crude, neo-fascist anti-Semitism"[38]— is almost archetypical, linking local grievances and a transnational ideology, stressing the defensive nature of its activities. This was best spelled out in a 1985 letter attributed to Sheikh Muhammed Hussein Fadlallah, Hezbollah's spiritual guide, and published in *al-Safir* (Beirut).[39] Hezbollah, according to the letter, does not "constitute an organized and closed party in Lebanon" but "an umma linked to the Muslims of the world by the solid doctrinal and religious connection

of Islam." Each member was "a fighting soldier." The letter stated:

> We declare openly and loudly that we are an umma which fears God only and is by no means ready to tolerate injustice, aggression, and humiliation. America, its Atlantic Pact allies, and the Zionist entity in the holy land of Palestine, attacked us and continue to do so without respite. . . . We have no alternative but to confront aggression by sacrifice.

Although beginning as a loose umbrella of groups, Hezbollah has followed the pattern of many successful militias (and insurgencies), becoming more formally organized as it matured. As Hajjar put it, the organization was a "sophisticated movement deeply rooted in its environment . . . born of insurgency, reared in violent circumstances, and matured with a seemingly greater sense of realism and pragmatism."[40] Its political, military, and social services wings all became more effective. It operated hospitals, schools, discount pharmacies, groceries, and orphanages. It became Lebanon's second largest employer.[41] In southern Lebanon and the Shi'ite slums of Beirut, it performed the classic function of parallel government, developing infrastructure, and providing loans and reconstruction aid where the Lebanese government could not or would not.[42] This was particularly effective after the Israeli attacks on that part of the country in the summer of 2006. Hezbollah was at the forefront of relief and reconstruction efforts, propelling it to new heights of popularity not only among its own constituency, but among other Lebanese and Arabs as well. Hezbollah, as journalist Robert Fisk wrote, "won the war for 'hearts and minds'."[43]

Politically, Hezbollah has benefited from the skillful leadership of Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of

the organization since the assassination of Abbas al-Musawi in 1992. Nasrallah is an astute and charismatic strategist who has attained a tremendous following and status not only in Lebanon, but across the Arab world. He has adjusted Hezbollah's programs to focus on unifying issues such as opposition to Israel rather than divisive ones such as the transformation of Lebanon into an Iranian-style Islamic state. He integrated his organization into the Lebanese political process. By 2006 it held 14 seats in parliament plus several ministries. While Hezbollah continued to benefit from extensive Iranian and Syrian support, it also developed its own funding sources, in part from involvement in organized crime but, more importantly, via contributions from the extensive Lebanese diaspora.[44] Simultaneously, Hezbollah became skillful at psychological warfare, using a variety of communications techniques based on the Internet and on its own media, particularly al-Manar television.[45]

Militarily, Hezbollah has been called the "best guerrilla force in the world."[46] While using suicide bombers, it developed a significant capability for larger irregular operations, waging "an efficient, disciplined, and popular guerrilla war against the Israeli military" in southern Lebanon until Israel's withdrawal in 2000.[47] Hezbollah was connected to a number of terrorist attacks outside Lebanon, including two bombings in Buenos Aires and the 1996 attack on a U.S. military barracks at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. The 2006 conflict with Israel further demonstrated Hezbollah's military prowess. As Andrew Exum notes, in comparison to other Arab forces which have faced the Israeli Defense Forces, Hezbollah is skilled at tactical maneuver, the use of its weapons systems, and flexible small unit leadership.[48] While the Israelis inflicted serious damage on Hezbollah forces and their military infrastructure,

the organization began rebuilding its armed capability immediately after the end of the conflict.[49]

Hezbollah thus constitutes one end of the spectrum of militias. But is it an archetype? There is little doubt that others, particularly in the Middle East, will attempt to emulate it. But Hezbollah could not have become what it is today without the significant external support it receives from Syria and particularly Iran. The question, then, is whether sponsorship of proxy or allied militias will remain an element of statecraft. An argument can be made that it will. Iran's Quds Force trains a variety of groups, most of which would like to replicate Hezbollah's success.[50] And other states also use foreign militias as proxies. Many of the militias in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, are sponsored by bordering states.[51] But an equally strong case can be made that only Iran has made sponsorship of co-communal militias a central part of its national security strategy. Most of the militia sponsors in Central Africa (and elsewhere) would probably drop this activity in the face of even modest pressure. Ultimately some militias might attempt to copy Hezbollah, but few, if any, will succeed.

The Kamajors of Sierra Leone illustrate the other end of the spectrum. Like Hezbollah, they were formed when individuals already skilled in the use of violence were organized for a political purpose, and when public order collapsed in the face of government ineptitude and weakness.[52] The Kamajors were hunters from the south and east of Sierra Leone employed by local chiefs. Tribal hunting societies in West Africa traditionally protected their villages. Beginning as early as 1992, such groups began to confront the brutal Revolutionary United Front (RUF) insurgents.[53] In 1994 Kamajors defeated the RUF around the city of Bo. Prior to this, the RUF

had convinced many of the people of Sierra Leone that they were protected by magic. The Kamajors were able to "demystify" them.[54] In 1996 President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah decided to use the Kamajors to replace foreign security contractors in government counterinsurgency operations. The group undertook autonomous actions and operated in conjunction with the foreign security corporations, government military forces, and, later, with international peacekeepers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN). Within 2 years they had supplanted government forces and militarily defeated the RUF. Because of their distrust of the government, they refused to integrate with its armed forces or disarm even after a settlement was reached with the RUF in 2002. As Comfort Ero notes:

> While their original involvement in the war was essentially to defend their communities, one of the most bitter observations is that they were successfully mobilised by government forces to use extreme coercion in the fight against rebel forces. In the end, they are part of the political problem confronting Sierra Leone. The heavy reliance of the Kabbah administration during the war inevitably challenges and undermines programmes aimed at restructuring Sierra Leone's armed forces in the post-war climate.[55]

A government engaged in counterinsurgency can approach militias in several ways. It can treat them the same as insurgents, using a combination of carrots and sticks. This must include some sort of demobilization and reintegration program, providing skills and opportunities for former militia members. It must be more beneficial for militia leaders and members to become part of the legitimate economy and state power system than to maintain their own alternative ones.

This holds some prospect if the conditions that led to the formation of the militia in the first place can be addressed. The government—if considered legitimate and competent by the militias—must be able to provide security to the militia's constituency. That was what was attempted (unsuccessfully) in Iraq as Ambassador J. Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority worked out a deal with the militias which would shift their members to either the Iraqi state military or civilian society.[56] Unfortunately, the plan failed when the government could not protect the Kurdish and Shi'ite communities. If a militia was formed to advance the interests of its leaders or it mutated into this, it may be very expensive or even impossible for the government to convince it to disband.

Cooptation is another approach. Governments can leave militias intact, buying them off with concessions or even simple cash. Governments sometimes use militias as proxies, finding them useful for dirty work that attracts pressure or disapproval if performed by state forces. Sudan's use of *janjaweed* militias against rebels or potential rebel supporters in Darfur and other ethnic militias to undermine and fight the insurgency centered on the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Shi'ite militias linked to the regime in Iraq, and right wing United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) are examples.[57] This can be risky since the government has little or no control over the militias. Again the paradoxical logic is at play: militias, being less constrained, may be more effective at actually destroying insurgents, but in so doing they may undercut public support for the counterinsurgency effort, making long-term success more difficult.

The inability of governments to control militias means that it is easy for them to become involved in

criminal enterprises—a fairly common pattern. The AUC in Colombia, for instance, moved into narcotics production and trafficking. In 2000 its leader admitted that 70 percent of the group's funding came from the drug trade.[58] In addition, militias may have less developed procedures than the government for vetting members or performing counterintelligence, increasing the chances of penetration by the insurgents. In Afghanistan the government has trained thousands of men affiliated with local militias to boost the security forces even though there are criminals and Taliban sympathizers among them. "We know," said Ross Davies, a Canadian police officer involved in the program, "that we are probably training some of the bad guys."[59] Militias trained and armed by the government as part of a counterinsurgency campaign may use their new prowess for other purposes, whether in conflict with each other or against the government. Again Afghanistan is instructive, with critics warning that plans to rearm the militias, even though intended to hinder the Taliban, will fuel tribal rivalries.[60] There is also the risk that militias integrated into government security forces may hijack them for their own ends, using the contacts, training, and equipment they have received to benefit their own constituency.

Even when it does not directly use militias, a government can form a loose working relationship with them. In Iraq, for instance, Sabrina Tavernise notes that most Shi'ite neighborhoods in Baghdad are run by "a complex network of relationships among the local militias, the police, and a powerful local council."[61] This too is dangerous. Members of *Jaish al Mahdi*, the Shi'ite militia led by Moqtada al Sadr, are known to infiltrate the police and military to obtain training and equipment.[62] If (or when) it faces the

government in open conflict, this will make it a more challenging opponent. Similarly Iraq's Kurdish leaders have inserted more than 10,000 fighters from their Peshmerga militias into the Iraqi army, possibly to help with the development of an independent Kurdistan in the future.[63] In Iraq's south, Iranian backed militias increase the influence of Teheran at the expense of the government in Baghdad.[64]

The appropriate approach, of course, depends on the nature of the militia itself, including its relationship to the insurgents, its objectives, and its power. If the insurgents pose a major threat to the government, the wisest policy may be to tolerate or placate powerful militias, perhaps waiting until later to deal with them. If the insurgency is under control, the government might be able to deal with other security problems, including militias. And the appropriate approach to a militia or multiple militias depends on the ultimate objective of the government. If its goals are extensive—a nation where the state itself holds a monopoly on coercion—then militias must be neutralized or eradicated. If the goals are more modest, such as an acceptable level of stability and state control or simply the defeat of the insurgents, then militias might be tolerated.

Tolerating militias, though, condemns a state to perpetual weakness, increasing the likelihood of future conflict. Militias can even hinder counterinsurgency. In Iraq, for instance, the profusion of Shi'ite militias—however justified—increases the insecurity of the Sunni community and thus makes political resolution of the insurgency more difficult.[65] But beleaguered states are often forced to tolerate militias even when they do not want to, simply because of an inability to do anything about them. Few outside states—even those committed to counterinsurgency—will provide

significant assistance for a countermilitia campaign. It is hard to imagine, for instance, the deployment of American troops and advisers in such a role. Since militias do not seek to take over a nation and rule it, ignoring them simply leaves the state weak but, in some sense, intact. They are like a parasite that renders its host vulnerable to other diseases but does not actually kill it. For this reason, they do not pose enough of a strategic threat that the United States or other states will become involved. So again, the paradoxical logic appears: an alliance with militias or even the creation of proxy militias might initially seem to be the best option for a state facing a serious insurgency, but may not be for long-term stabilization. It is a dangerous expedient.

One other type of militia merits consideration. Some analysts contend that the Internet has made "virtual" militias (and insurgencies) possible and potentially dangerous.[66] That runs counter to the definition of militias used here since "virtual" militias do not control territory or assume state functions. Perhaps, though, virtual militias and insurgents should be considered a separate category. Interestingly, just as the emergence of "real" insurgents sometimes spawn the creation of counterinsurgent militias, the emergence of "virtual" insurgents has led to the formation of virtual counterinsurgent vigilantes. One example is the "Internet Haganah," part of a network of private anti-terrorist web monitoring services, which collects information on extremist websites, passes this on to state intelligence services, and attempts to convince Internet service providers not to host radical sites.[67] The logic is that it takes a network to counter a network. As insurgents and terrorists become more networked and more "virtual," states, with their inherently bureaucratic procedures and hierarchical

organizations, will be ineffective. Vigilantes, without such constraints, may be.

Criminal Organizations. In any society where insurgency takes root, organized crime will be pervasive. This is more than coincidence. Both sprout from common roots: ineffective governance, systemic weakness and pathology, and a culture or tradition of clandestine activity. Criminal organizations, though, tend to have different objectives and characteristics than militias and insurgencies. They have little or no sense of serving a constituency other than their members. Their relationship with society is purely parasitic; they seek public passivity rather than active support. They do provide economic opportunity and, in some cases, a sense of social identity, but only to their members. Criminal organizations may control territory or "turf," but they seldom, if ever, perform public administrative functions.[68]

Insurgents may be customers, partners, or enemies of organized crime. As customers, they purchase or trade for arms, information, other resources such as the kidnapping victims captured by Iraqi criminal gangs, or services such as smuggling and money laundering. As partners, they protect and profit from illicit activity. This is particularly common in narcotics-producing regions. According to the UN, insurgents were linked to drug trafficking in seven of the world's nine key drug producing areas.[69] "Today, the bulk of the global cultivation of opium and coca," Svante E. Cornell wrote, "is taking place in conflict zones, while the trafficking of their derivatives has come to heavily involve insurgent and terrorist groups operating between the source and destination areas of illicit drugs."[70] Crime diminishes the need to raise money from the public or external sponsors. It gives the insurgent leaders

the funds to buy weapons and exercise patronage and corruption. This connection between insurgency and crime comes both from *need*—insurgents must finance and supply themselves—and *opportunity*. As Chris Dishman argues, pressure from security forces leads terrorist organizations (and, one would assume, insurgencies as well) to decentralize. Lower and mid-level components of the organization, operating with little oversight from top leadership, are free to form closer bonds with criminal organizations.[71] And they see benefits in doing so since having their own sources of income makes them even more autonomous from the upper echelons of their organization.

Insurgencies can evolve into criminal organizations. "Particularly in protracted conflicts," Cornell notes, "entire groups or parts of groups come to shift their focus increasingly toward the objective of profit."[72] The best example is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).[73] Cornell again is instructive:

> Over time, insurgent groups tend to become increasingly involved in the drug trade. Beginning with tolerating and taxing the trade, insurgents tend to gradually shift to more lucrative self-involvement. Self-involvement, in turn, generates a risk of affecting insurgent motivational structures, tending to weaken ideological motivations and strengthen economic ones.[74]

This happens across the globe. For instance, most armed combatants in Africa's internal wars have either supplanted existing organized criminal networks or merged with them.[75]

Iraq is a classic case of preexisting organized crime initially developing a partnership with insurgents followed by a melding where the insurgents themselves became criminal organizations or, at least, barely distinguishable from organized crime.[76] The corrupt

nature of Saddam Hussein's regime created a fertile environment for this. After the implementation of UN sanctions in the 1990s, the regime itself ran many rackets with Uday Hussein at the pinnacle. The Ba'ath party, Robert Looney notes, "became more an organized crime syndicate than a political organization."[77] Saddam Hussein allowed this as a form of patronage. Since former regime members played a major role in the early days of the insurgency, it was easy for the insurgents to capitalize on the criminal connections and procedures already in place. Iranian based criminal gangs added to the problem. A good portion of the looting that took place in March and April 2003 was engineered or funded by these gangs.[78]

Initially the Iraqi insurgents did not need to use criminal activity to raise funds. Former regime officials had plenty of money left from their days in power and augmented this with foreign contributions. At this point, the insurgents were primarily customers for organized crime, buying weapons and kidnapping victims from the gangs. Eventually, though, the insurgents themselves turned to crime when their pre-war resources were depleted. The petroleum black market was especially lucrative, but kidnapping, money laundering, and the drug trade also generated funds.[79] By 2006, according U.S. assessments, the insurgents were raising tens of millions of dollars from smuggling, kidnapping, counterfeiting, and robbery.[80] Simultaneously, Iraq's militias merged with or became criminal organizations. This greatly complicated counterinsurgency efforts. As a report from Oxford Analytica noted, "Rampant serious and violent crime in Iraq seriously reduces the government's ability to fight terrorism and insurgency, preventing community intelligence-gathering and providing militants with

a community of traffickers and 'paid-for' attackers to support militancy."[81]

Counterinsurgents can approach criminal organizations in a number of ways. They may ignore them, particularly if the criminals are not closely tied to the insurgency. Or the regime may take a more active stance, coopting criminal organizations by giving them something they want (control of a market niche, amnesty) in exchange for severing ties to the insurgents or active participation in the counterinsurgency campaign. After the 2001 American invasion of Afghanistan, for instance, U.S. officials apparently worked out a deal with Afghan drug lord Haji Bashir Noorzai to obtain information about the Taliban.[82] As with militias, such an approach simply postpones dealing with the criminal problem. This may be necessary, but it is never desirable. Again like militias, the government knows that external support may diminish or dry up after the defeat of the insurgency, leaving it to undertake an anticrime campaign on its own (unless the state hosts major narcotic producers or traffickers). Alternatively, the government may seek to neutralize or crush criminal organizations, particularly if the criminals are closely linked to the insurgents or if the insurgency itself is at a low enough level to allow the diversion of security resources to other tasks. As with militias, the appropriate response is shaped both by the nature of the insurgency and by the specific role that criminal organizations play in it.

Private Military Companies. Private military companies (PMCs) have existed for millennia. States used them to augment their own capabilities, particularly in specialized skills that their own forces lacked. A state could hire mercenaries when necessary without having to bear the cost and risk of a standing military.[83] All

that was required was demand and supply—warriors with skills not needed or wanted by their own states.

Today PMCs provide the same benefits: specialized capabilities, surge capacity, and controllability. These are all important in counterinsurgency. As Herbert Howe noted, private armed organizations can deploy faster than multinational and perhaps even national forces (with fewer political restrictions). They can be less financially taxing than state forces in a multinational coalition, and the states hiring them can handpick from a pool of combat veterans.[84] There are three types of PMCs (or three types of PMC services since individual companies can provide two or even three of the services): military *provider* firms which undertake actual combat; military *consultant* firms which provide advice and training; and military *support* firms which offer functions such as logistics, intelligence, and medical care.[85] The 1990s, the breakup of the Soviet Union, the advent of majority rule in South Africa, and eventually the end of the Balkan wars produced many people with military and intelligence experience but limited prospects for using them in their own nations.[86] In the United States, the desire to rationalize defense and the demands of protracted peace operations in the Balkans and elsewhere led to an increased reliance on contractors for a wide range of services. The American military, with its very competitive career system, always retired a large number of relatively young officers and noncommissioned officers. For many, the idea of staying involved in defense issues as consultants and contractors is appealing.

Military providers are the most controversial type of PMCs. They gained worldwide attention in the 1990s through the actions of Executive Outcomes, a firm composed of former members of the South African

Defence Force (SADF), most with a background in special forces. In the 1990s, the beleaguered governments of Sierra Leone and Angola hired Executive Outcomes for counterinsurgency.[87] While the arrangements were eventually terminated because of the financial burden they placed on the African governments, the company had impressive tactical success, particularly in Sierra Leone.[88] Ironically, the formation of ethnically-based militias in that country—the Kamajors, Tamboro, and Kapras—led the regime to conclude it could protect itself without Executive Outcomes.[89] At about the same time, the government of Papua New Guinea hired Sandline International, another PMC initially spun off from Executive Outcomes, and Sri Lanka contracted counterinsurgency assistance from Saladin Security.[90] The primary function of PMCs in these conflicts was not pacification per se, but protecting the resources which funded the government.[91]

The Balkans conflict of the 1990s illustrated the importance of military consultant firms. Military Professional Resources International (MPRI), a firm founded by retired U.S. Army senior officers and jokingly referred to as "generals without borders," played a legendary role in professionalizing the Croatian military.[92] To some in the United States, the idea of using retired officers as trainers and advisers was very attractive. But it is not new. In 1990 Rod Paschall argued that the U.S. military itself was not well-suited for what was then called "low intensity conflict" (which included counterinsurgency) and hence should rely on contractors, especially retired Special Forces soldiers.[93]

The war on terror revived the idea of contractors as "force multipliers." Since 2003, for instance,

Iraq has seen a greater reliance on PMCs than any counterinsurgency campaign in history. Military providers like Blackwater U.S.A., a company founded in 1998 by former Navy SEALs, have provided security details for American and Iraqi officials, private contractors, nongovernmental organizations, and journalists.[94] They also guarded oil fields, convoys, banks, residential compounds, and office buildings. And Blackwater is only one of many PMCs which have played a role in Iraq. A year into the insurgency, there were an estimated 20,000 foreign soldiers from a dizzying array of backgrounds.[95] By 2007, there were 48,000.[96] Much of the logistics for the U.S. military has been handled by the giant firms Halliburton and KBR (formerly Kellogg, Brown, and Root). Nearly every PMC in the United States and the United Kingdom has had a contract of some sort in Iraq, and many more were created expressly for that conflict.

For outside providers of counterinsurgency support, particularly the United States, PMCs are appealing. Like contracting in general, PMCs free uniformed service members for other tasks. The complexity of counterinsurgency makes the experience of older, retired, or former service members particularly valuable. In his February 2007 congressional testimony, for instance, Lieutenant General David Petraeus, the commander of American forces in Iraq, said he considered the thousands of contract security forces an important addition to the American military and Iraqi forces.[97] While contractors are paid more than soldiers, they are cheaper in the long run since the U.S. Government has no obligation to provide benefits or career advancement. They help retention by cutting down on the time that soldiers are deployed. PMCs also increase the chances of sustaining support for

U.S. involvement in a counterinsurgency campaign. For some reason, the public seems to have greater tolerance for casualties among American contractors (and certainly among non-American contractors) than American servicemen.[98]

But there are problems. Sandline provides a good illustration. The company, led by British Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Tim Spicer, undertook both combat operations and training. It was closely linked to mineral and oil extraction companies, protecting them in the midst of internal conflicts and the inability of the state to provide security. In Sierra Leone, Sandline continued where Executive Outcomes left off. However, its involvement in a plan to import weapons into Sierra Leone despite an international ban discredited the company and its supporters in the British government. Then Spicer was jailed in Papua New Guinea when the government changed. According to the Sandline website, the company disbanded in 2004 because of a

> . . . general lack of governmental support for Private Military Companies willing to help end armed conflicts in places like Africa, in the absence of effective international intervention . . . Without such support the ability of Sandline to make a positive difference in countries where there is widespread brutality and genocidal behaviour is materially diminished.[99]

The short and tumultuous life of this company illustrates some of the problems associated with using PMCs in counterinsurgency.

Like any contractor, PMCs are more focused on fulfillment of their contract than on larger strategic objectives. For instance, former Marine Colonel T. X. Hammes has described the adverse effects of PMC personal security detachments in Iraq. They were so determined to protect their VIP that they sometimes

abused or frightened Iraqi bystanders—precisely the people the counterinsurgency campaign sought to win over. As Hammes put it, "The contractor was hired to protect the principal. He had no stake in pacifying the country . . . and generally treated locals as expendable."[100] The same charge has been leveled against Dyncorp security contractors in Afghanistan.[101] Lines of authority can be confused when PMCs are present since contractors report to the agency that hired them rather than the military authority in a given area. PMCs are not under the same discipline as government troops. They may not follow official rules of engagement.[102] And they can abandon a conflict zone if conditions become difficult, potentially leaving government forces in the lurch.[103] With PMCs—as with most things—those who hire them get what they pay for. Quality is expensive. If a government runs out of money, PMCs leave regardless of whether the state can function without them. Ultimately, then, using PMCs for counterinsurgency may be a necessary short-term expedient, but *relying* on them is dangerous. The key is whether the government takes advantage of the breathing space given by PMCs to develop its own capability.

Fourth Forces.

Fourth forces are unarmed groups or organizations which affect an insurgency. The most common types are foreign or multinational corporations (excluding PMCs); international and nongovernmental organizations; and international media and other information organizations. As with third forces, they have proliferated. In many cases, they pursue a titular neutrality, not explicitly seeking the victory of either

side. In effect, though, their actions often benefit one of the participants more than the others.

International Corporations. The involvement of international corporations in a complex conflict is a dual-edged sword. They can strengthen and fund a beleaguered government by buying its products or paying for market concessions. They may sell weapons or other goods and services needed for the counterinsurgency campaign. But they also may place conditions on sales, loans, or other deals. These are difficult enough for a weak state during peacetime, but can be even more dangerous during armed conflict. Corporations can inadvertently erode the legitimacy of governments by making them appear as the puppets or proxies of foreigners. Although it is rarer, international corporations can help insurgents when the rebels control some valuable resource such as diamonds or coltan.[104]

International Media. International news coverage can affect insurgencies even when not seeking to do so. By publicizing a conflict—particularly its humanitarian costs—the international media brings pressure to cease hostilities or arrive at a speedy settlement. But this seldom falls equally on both insurgents and counterinsurgents. There is more pressure on the government to make concessions than on insurgents to cease operations. Governments are more susceptible to international pressure than insurgencies. Most insurgencies, especially those involved in crime, can survive with little or no outside support. No government can. The world has more leverage over states than over insurgents. Media coverage leads outsiders to use this influence, holding states to higher ethical standards.

In addition, most members of the media have an inherent anti-authoritarian bias. While they may not

state it openly, they often assume that there is some justification for an insurgency. The tendency is to accord insurgents "victim" status. And the public loves a victim. Hence extensive international media coverage of an insurgency tends to promote the perception of moral parity. Seldom are insurgents portrayed as illegitimate aggressors. This tendency is amplified when the United States is involved. There is a growing hostility toward the United States among the global media which leads to negative coverage of any cause that Washington supports.

International media and other sources for the transmission of information level the psychological playing field. In the 20th century, insurgents struggled to reach external audiences. Only bold and intrepid reporters would venture to the difficult, dangerous areas where insurgents operated. It was the paradoxical logic again: insurgents protected themselves by remaining in remote regions, but this made it difficult to publicize their cause. Now the global media, satellite communications, cell phones, the Internet, and other information technology gives insurgents instant access to national and world audiences. Once the communications channels opened, the flexibility of insurgents and their lack of ethical and legal constraints gave them advantages in the psychological battlespace. This did not assure success—many insurgents transmitted ineffective messages or put themselves in danger by publicity—but it did offer an opportunity to make a connection with supporters they might not otherwise have found. Like spam email, the greater the bulk of the transmission, the greater the likelihood that *someone* will be receptive (while nonreceptive audiences simply ignore unwanted messages).

In Iraq, for instance, Al Zawaraa television, which is owned by a Sunni member of Iraq's Parliament living

in Damascus and distributed by Nilesat, an Egyptian-government-owned company, is considered the semi-official voice of the Sunni insurgents, broadcasting propaganda videos they produce, including those showing bloody attacks.[105] It has signed a distribution deal with several European companies to broadcast it there and in the United States. The wildly popular Qatar-based news network Al Jazeera, while less overtly linked to the insurgents than Al Zawaraa, contributed to the rebel information campaign through a steady barrage of criticism of the United States and the Iraqi government (at least until expelled in 2004). Whether one believes that Al Jazeera offered a "balanced" perspective (as it claimed) or supported the insurgents, it complicated counterinsurgent information operations and provided the insurgents publicity (and hence legitimacy) they would not otherwise have had. This also helped them adjust and refine their operations. As Tony Cordesman puts it in his study of the Iraq conflict:

> Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations have learned that media reporting on the results of their attacks provides a powerful indicator of their success and what kind of attack to strike at in the future (sic). While many attacks are planned long in advance or use "targeting" based on infiltration or simple observation, others are linked to media reporting on events, movements, etc. The end result is that insurgents can "swarm" around given types of targets, striking at vulnerable points where the target and method of attack is known to have success.[106]

Nonmedia information sources, particularly the Internet, are an even more powerful tool for insurgents. Websites are used for recruitment and building linkages with other groups both in Iraq and externally.[107] The Internet is used to disseminate videos, pictures, and accounts of attacks as part of the

insurgency's psychological operations and as a training aid. Cordesman notes that "Terrorist and insurgent organizations from all over the world have established the equivalent of an informal tactical net in which they exchange techniques for carrying out attacks, technical data on weapons, etc."[108] There may be more than 800 insurgent websites. And this does not even count the thousands of others which link to them. The Internet, even more than the media, is beyond the control of counterinsurgents. Techniques such as pressuring companies or states which host insurgent websites is futile.

International and Nongovernmental Organizations. International and nongovernmental organizations also level the playing field between insurgents and counterinsurgents. To gain access to insurgent controlled regions, international and nongovernment organizations often treat the rebels as the co-equals of the government, thus helping to legitimize them.[109] Insurgents are well aware of this and use it in their psychological campaign. Humanitarian organizations are almost always critical of military operations, whether by rebels or the government. The British relief group, Oxfam, for instance, often demands that the government of Uganda cease military operations against the brutal "Lord's Resistance Army."[110] Some observers even claim that humanitarian assistance organizations prolong conflicts once such groups develop a vested organizational interest in them.[111] Without humanitarian crises, humanitarian relief organizations would have no *raison d'etre*. Equally, the provision of humanitarian assistance relieves insurgents from the burden of caring for the population in areas they control and provides lootable or taxable income flows.[112]

External humanitarian efforts, while exceptionally valuable to alleviate suffering, may leave a state unprepared to take over the provision of services when the conflict ends or subsides. Hence the widespread involvement of international and nongovernmental organizations in an insurgency increases the chances that conflict will reemerge once the shortcomings and weaknesses of the state provide political space for insurgents or other violent actors. The paradoxical logic emerges once more: What seems best—the alleviation of suffering—may increase the chances of renewed suffering at a later date. Even so, it is impractical and counterproductive to deliberately limit the involvement of international and nongovernmental organizations in a conflict. Again, this reflects the political asymmetry of insurgency: governments who limit or control humanitarian efforts face intense pressure, while insurgents can do so with impunity.

RETHINKING THE DYNAMICS

Beginning in the 1990s, the scholarly and policy communities developed an extensive analytical literature on the internal conflicts that wracked the post-Cold War world. But when the U.S. military and other elements of the government began reassessing insurgency after 2001, they largely ignored this literature and instead drew on earlier analyses of the British experience in Malaya in the 1940s and 1950s, the French experience in Algeria in the 1950s, and the American experience in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. As the U.S. Army sought to understand the conflict in Iraq, for instance, the most recommended books for its officers were John Nagl's *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife* (which dealt with the British involvement in

Malaya and the American experience in Vietnam) and David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare* (which was drawn from the French campaigns in Indochina and Algeria).[113] Both are excellent. But both deal with wars of imperial maintenance or nationalistic transition, not with complex communal conflicts where armed militias and organized crime play a powerful role. This tendency to look too far back in the quest to understand contemporary insurgency is a serious flaw. More recent analysis of internal wars can tell us much about the insurgencies that the United States currently faces and may face in the future.

Because of globalization, the decline of overt state sponsorship of insurgency, the continuing importance of informal outside sponsorship, and the nesting of insurgency within complex conflicts associated with state weakness or failure, the dynamics of contemporary insurgency are more like a violent and competitive market than war in the traditional sense where clear and discrete combatants seek strategic victory. Thinking of insurgency in this way not only offers valuable insights into how it works, but also suggests a very different approach to counterinsurgency.

In economic markets, participants might dream of strategic "victory"—outright control of the market such as that exercised by Standard Oil prior to 1911—but many factors, especially competition and regulation, prevent it. The best they can hope for is to attain and sustain some degree of market *domination*. Most have even more limited objectives—survival and profitability. This also describes many insurgencies, particularly 21st century ones. Competition and other factors, such as the absence of state sponsors, mitigate against outright conquest of the state in the mode of Castro or Ho Chi Minh.[114] It is nearly impossible for a

single entity, whether the state or a nonstate participant, to exercise a monopoly of power. Market domination and share constantly shift.

In contemporary complex conflicts, profitability often is literal rather than metaphorical. An extensive (and growing) analytical literature chronicles the evolution of violent movements like insurgencies from "grievance" to "greed."[115] The idea is that political grievances may instigate an insurgency but, as a conflict progresses, economic motives play a larger role, eventually even dominating. While combatants, "have continued to mobilize around political, communal, and security objectives," Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman write, "increasingly these objectives have become obscured and sometimes contradicted by their more businesslike activities."[116] Conflict gives insurgents access to money and resources out of proportion to what they would have in peacetime. As Paul Collier, one of the pioneers of this idea, explains:

> Conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance. If economic agendas are driving conflict, then it is likely that some groups are benefiting from the conflict and these groups, therefore, have some interest in initiating and sustaining it.[117]

The counterinsurgents—the regime—also develop vested political and economic interests in sustaining a controllable conflict. A regime facing an armed insurgency is normally under somewhat less outside pressure for economic and political reform. It can justifiably demand more of its citizens and, conversely, postpone meeting their demands. Insurgency sometimes brings outside financial support and provides opportunities for corrupt regime members to tap black markets. Even though internal conflict may

diminish overall economic activity, it increases profit margins by constraining competition. This, too, can work to the advantage of elites, including those in the government or security services. Collier continues:

> . . . various identifiable groups will "do well out of the war." They are opportunistic businessmen, criminals, traders, and the rebel organizations themselves. The rebels will do well through predation on primary commodity exports, traders do well through the widened margins on the goods they sell to consumers, criminals will do well through theft, and opportunistic businessmen will do well at the expense of those businesses that are constrained to honest conduct.[118]

Internal wars "frequently involve the emergence of another alternative system of profit, power, and protection in which conflict serves the political and economic interests of a variety of groups."[119] Hence the insurgents, criminals, militias, or even the regime have a greater interest in sustaining a controlled conflict than in attaining victory.

The merging of armed violence and economics amplifies the degree to which complex conflicts emulate the characteristics and dynamics of volatile, hypercompetitive markets. For instance, like all markets, complex conflicts operate according to rules (albeit informal, unwritten ones). In the most basic sense, the rules dictate what is and is not acceptable as participants compete for market domination or share. Participants may violate the rules but doing so entails risk and cost. The more risk averse a participant—and governments are normally more risk averse than the nongovernment participants, and participants satisfied with their market position and with a positive expectation about the future are more risk averse than those which are unsatisfied and pessimistic about

the future—the less likely it is to challenge the rules. And these rules are conflict- and time-specific; they periodically evolve and shift. This year's rule "road map" might not be next year's.

As in a commercial market, participants in a complex conflict may enter as small, personalistic companies. Some may even be like family businesses built on kinship or ethnicity. But, as in a commercial market, the more successful participants evolve into more complex, variegated corporate structures. Insurgencies then undertake many of the same practices as corporations:

- Acquisitions and mergers (insurgent factions may join in partnerships, or a powerful one may integrate a less powerful one);

- Shedding or closing unproductive divisions (insurgencies may pull out of geographic regions or jettison a faction of the movement);

- Forming strategic partnerships (insurgencies may arrange relationships with internal or external groups—political, criminal, etc.— which share their objectives. The profusion of information and information technology, of course, facilitates this. Just as information technology allows commercial businesses to form strategic partnerships which previously would have been impossible or ineffective, so too with insurgencies);

- Reorganizing for greater effectiveness and efficiency;

- Developing, refining, and at times abandoning products or product lines; (insurgencies develop political, psychological, economic, and military techniques, operational methods, or

themes. They refine these over time, sometimes dropping those which prove ineffective or too costly);

- Advertising and creating brand identity (insurgent psychological activities are akin to advertising. Their "brands" include political and psychological themes, and particular methods and techniques);

- Accumulating and expending capital (insurgents accumulate both financial and political capital, using it as required);

- Subcontracting or contracting out functions (contemporary insurgents may contract out tasks they are ineffective at or which they wish to disassociate themselves from);

- Bringing in outside consultants (this can be done by physical presence of outside advisers or, in the contemporary environment, by "virtual" consultation);

- Entering and leaving market niches;

- Creating new markets and market niches;

- Creating and altering organizational culture; and,

- Professional development and establishing patterns of career progression.

Insurgencies, like militias, can be more or less complex, more or less formal. The more complex and formal they are, the more their behavioral dynamics emulate those of a corporation. Finally, as in commercial markets, a conflict market is affected by what happens in other markets as well—just as the automobile market is

affected by the petroleum market, or the American national market by the European market, the Iraq conflict market is affected by the Afghan conflict market or by the market of political ideas in the United States and other parts of the Arab world.

That contemporary insurgents emulate corporations in a hyper competitive (and violent) market shapes their operational methods. Specifically, insurgents gravitate toward operational methods which maximize desired effects while minimizing the costs and risks. This, in conjunction with the profusion of information, the absence of state sponsors providing conventional military material, and the transparency of the operating environment, has increased the role terrorism plays for insurgents. Insurgents have always used terrorism. But one of the characteristics of this quintessentially psychological method of violence is that its effect is limited to those who know of it. When, for instance, the Viet Cong killed a local political leader, it might have had the desired psychological effect on people in the region, but did little to shape the beliefs, perceptions, or morale of those living far away. Today, information technology amplifies the psychological effects of a terrorist incident by publicizing it to a much wider audience. This includes both satellite, 24-hour media coverage, and, more importantly, the Internet which, Gordon McCormick and Frank Giordano note, "has made symbolic violence a more powerful instrument of insurgent mobilisation than at any time in the past."[120]

So terrorism is effective. It is easier and cheaper to undertake than conventional military operations. It is less costly and risky to the insurgent organization as a whole (since terrorist operations require only a very small number of personnel and a limited investment in training and materiel). It is efficient when psychologi-

cal effects are compared to the resource investment. It allows insurgents to conjure an illusion of strength even when they are weak. Terrorism is less likely to lead to outright victory, but for an insurgency that does not seek that, but only market domination or survival, terrorism is the tool of choice.

As we approach the second decade of the 21st century, there are a few old-fashioned insurgencies trying to militarily defeat the government, triumphantly enter the capital city, and form their own regime. The more common pattern, though, are insurgencies which satisfy themselves with domination of all or part of the power market in their state. The insurgents in Iraq, Colombia, India, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and even Afghanistan have little hope of or even interest in becoming a regime—whether of their entire country or some break-away segment of it. To continue conceptualizing contemporary insurgency as a variant of traditional, Clausewitzean war, where two antagonists each seek to impose their will on and vanquish the opponent in pursuit of political objectives, does not capture today's reality. Clausewitz may have been right that war is always fought for political purposes, but not all armed conflict is war.

RETHINKING COUNTERINSURGENCY

The rethinking of insurgency described in this monograph—the consideration of third and fourth forces, the nesting of insurgency in complex conflicts, the market approach to understanding the dynamics of insurgency, and so forth—suggests a very different way of thinking about (and undertaking) *counter*insurgency. At the strategic level, the risk to the United States is not that insurgents will "win" in the traditional sense,

take over their country, and shift it from a partner to an enemy. It is that complex internal conflicts, especially ones involving insurgency, will generate other adverse effects: the destabilization of regions, resource flows, and markets; the blossoming of transnational crime; humanitarian disasters; transnational terrorism; and so forth. Given this, the U.S. goal should not automatically be the defeat of the insurgents by the regime (which may be impossible, particularly when the partner regime is only half-heartedly committed to it), but the rapid resolution of the conflict. In other words, a quick and sustainable outcome which integrates most of the insurgents into the national power structure is less damaging to U.S. national interests than a protracted conflict which leads to the complete destruction of the insurgents. Protracted conflict, not insurgent victory, is the threat.

The traditional American solution to insurgency is to strengthen the regime and encourage it to reform. Today, that may no longer be adequate. All trends are toward less effective central governments, not more so, particularly in the type of nations prone to insurgency. The norm is some sort of power-sharing arrangement between the state and other organizations and forces. And, as noted earlier, regimes themselves often develop a vested interest in sustainment of controlled conflict. Thus the state-centric approach to counterinsurgency codified in American strategy and doctrine swims against the tide of history.

Because Americans consider insurgency a form of war, U.S. strategy and doctrine are based on the same notion as the more general approach to war: it is a pathological action which evil people impose on an otherwise peace-loving society. It is a disease which sometimes infects an otherwise healthy body politic.

This metaphor is a useful one. Today, Americans consider a human body without parasites and pathogens "normal." When parasites or pathogens invade, medical treatment eradicates them and restores the body to its "normal" condition. But throughout most of human history, persistent parasites and pathogens were, in fact, normal. Most people simply tolerated them. Today this characterizes conflict in many parts of the world. Rather than an abnormal and episodic condition which should be eradicated, it is normal and tolerable.

Because Americans see insurgency as a form of war and, following Clausewitz, view war as quintessentially political, they focus on the political causes and dimensions of insurgency. Certainly insurgency does have an important political component. But that is only part of the picture. Insurgency also fulfills the economic and psychological needs of the insurgents. It provides a source of income out of proportion to what the insurgents could otherwise earn, particularly for the lower ranks. And, it provides a source of identity and empowerment for those with few other sources of these things. Without a gun, most insurgent foot soldiers are simply poor, uneducated, disempowered youth with no prospects. Insurgency changes that. It makes insurgents important and powerful. And it provides them a livelihood. Again, the market metaphor is useful: so long as demand exists, supply and a market to link supply and demand will appear. So long as there are unmet human needs which can be addressed by irregular violence, markets of violence will be created.

The tendency of insurgencies to evolve into criminal organizations suggests that counterinsurgency strategy itself must undergo significant shifts during

the course of a conflict. If an insurgency has reached the point that it is motivated more by greed than grievance, addressing the political causes of the conflict will not be effective. The counterinsurgency campaign must become more like a counterorganized crime or countergang program. Law enforcement should replace the military as the primary manager of a mature counterinsurgency campaign. This evolving life cycle of insurgency also implies that there is a window of opportunity early in an insurgency before its psychological, political, and economic dynamics are set. For outsiders undertaking counterinsurgency, a rapid, large-scale security, political, law enforcement, intelligence, and economic effort in the nascent stages of an insurgency will bring greater results than an incremental increase in assistance after the conflict has set. Timing matters.

In cases where a serious insurgency cannot be managed, the state and its supporters might consider an approach designed to deliberately encourage the insurgency to mutate into something less dangerous such as an organized criminal organization. This is never desirable, but there may be rare instances where organized crime is less of a threat than sustained insurgency. Call this strategic methadone.

Because Americans view insurgency as political, American counterinsurgency strategy and doctrine stress the need for political reform in societies which suffer from it. This is necessary but not sufficient. A comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy must simultaneously raise the economic and psychological costs and risks of participation in an insurgency (or other forms of conflict) and provide alternatives. David Keen has written:

> In order to move toward more lasting solution to the problem of mass violence, we need to understand and acknowledge that for significant groups this violence represents not a problem but a solution. We need to think of modifying the structure of incentives that are encouraging people to orchestrate, fund, or perpetuate acts of violence.[121]

Hence economic assistance and job training are as important to counterinsurgency as political reform. Businesses started and jobs created as are as much "indicators of success" as insurgents killed or intelligence provided. Because the margins for economic activity tend to widen during conflict, counterinsurgency should attempt to make markets as competitive as possible.[122] Because economies dependent on exports of a single commodity or a few commodities are particularly prone to protracted conflict, counterinsurgency must include a plan for economic diversification.[123] A comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy must offer alternative sources of identity and empowerment for bored, disillusioned, and disempowered young males. Simply providing low paying, low status jobs or the opportunity to attend school is not enough. To develop more effective programs for this, counterinsurgent planners should consult inner city community leaders with relevant experience.

Women's empowerment—an inevitable brake on the aggression of disillusioned young males—also should be a central part of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy. But this illustrates one of the enduring problems and paradoxes of counterinsurgency: What are outside counterinsurgency supporters to do when some element of a nation's *culture* contributes to the conflict? Evidence suggest that cultures based on female repression, a warrior ethos, and some other

social structures and factors are more prone to violence. Should counterinsurgency support attempt to alter the culture, or simply accept the fact that even when insurgency is quelled, it is likely to reappear?

The core dilemma, then, is that truly resolving insurgency requires extensive social reengineering. Yet this is extremely difficult (and expensive). This problem has many manifestations. In some cases, it may be impossible to provide forms of employment and sources of identity more lucrative than insurgency. Regimes and national elites—the very partners the United States seeks to empower in counterinsurgency—often see actions necessary to stem the insurgency as a threat to their hold on power. The conflict itself may be the lesser evil. For many regimes, insurgents pose less of a threat than a unified and effective security force. More regimes have been overthrown by coups than by insurgencies. Hence they deliberately keep their security forces weak and divided. Alas, those with the greatest personal interest in resolving the conflict—the people—have the least ability to create peace.[124] Yet American strategy and doctrine are based on the assumption that our partners seek the same thing we do: the quickest possible resolution of the conflict. We assume our partners will pursue political reform and security force improvement. We thus are left perplexed when insurgencies like the ongoing one in Colombia fester for decades, unable to grasp the dissonance between our objectives and those of our erstwhile allies.

The implications of this are profound. If, in fact, insurgency is not simply a variant of war, if the real threat is the deleterious effects of sustained conflict, and if it is part of systemic failure and pathology in which key elites and organizations develop a vested

interest in sustaining the conflict, the objective of counterinsurgency support should *not* be simply strengthening the government so that it can impose its will more effectively on the insurgents, but systemic reengineering. The most effective posture for outsiders is not to be an ally of the government and thus a sustainer of the flawed socio-political-economic system, but to be a neutral mediator and peacekeeper (even when the outsiders have much more ideological affinity for the regime than for the insurgents).[125] If this is true, the United States should only undertake counterinsurgency support in the most pressing instances.

Outside of the historic American geographic area of concern (the Caribbean basin), the United States should only undertake counterinsurgency as part of an equitable, legitimate, and broad-based multinational coalition. Unless the world community is willing to form a neo-trusteeship such as in Bosnia, Eastern Slavonia, Kosovo, and East Timor in order to reconstruct the administration, security system, and civil society of a state in conflict, the best that can be done is ameliorating, as much as possible, the human suffering associated with the violence by creating internationally-protected "safe areas."[126] In most cases, American strategic resources are better spent attempting to prevent insurgency or containing it when it does occur. Clearly systemic reengineering is not a task for the United States acting alone. Nor is it a task for the U.S. military. When the United States is part of a stabilization coalition, the primary role for the U.S. military should be protecting civilians until other security forces, preferably local ones but possibly coalition units, can assume that task.

To summarize, then, American strategy for counterinsurgency should recognize three distinct

insurgency settings, each demanding a different response:

- A functioning government with at least some degree of legitimacy can be rescued by Foreign Internal Defense.

- There is no functioning and legitimate government but a broad international and regional consensus supports the creation of a neo-trusteeship until systemic reengineering is completed. In such instances, the United States should provide military, economic, and political support as part of a multinational force operating under the authority of the UN.

- There is no functioning and legitimate government and no international or regional consensus for the formation of a neo-trusteeship. In these cases, the United States should pursue containment of the conflict by support to regional states and, in conjunction with partners, help create humanitarian "safe zones" within the conflictive state.

This is a radically different way of thinking about counterinsurgency than is currently found in U.S. strategy and doctrine. But if the American defense community fails to rethink insurgency, the United States is unlikely to be successful at counterinsurgency should future political leaders again deem it in the national interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- With the Army and the Marine Corps playing a major role, the U.S. Government should begin an

interagency and multinational effort to develop new strategic concepts, strategies, doctrine, and capabilities for dealing with complex conflicts and systemic failures and pathologies which include imbedded insurgencies. The primary role for the U.S. military should be temporarily protecting civilians

- Army leader development, professional education, doctrine, training, and wargaming should be revised to reflect the results of this process.

ENDNOTES

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5. *Discriminate Deterrence*, Report of the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, January 1988, p. 13.

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7. Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2d Ed., revised, Washington, DC: Potomac, 2005. In this update of his 2001 book, O'Neill categorized insurgencies as anarchist, egalitarian, traditionalist, apocalyptic-utopian, pluralist, secessionist, reformist, preservationist, or commercialist.

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9. FM 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*, Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, and Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, December 2006, p. 1-1.

10. FM 100-20/AFP 3-2, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, p. X.

11. *Ibid*.

12. FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*, p. 1-1.

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15. Daniel L. Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Fall 2006, pp. 85-87. David Kilcullen argues that al Qaeda's grand strategy is, in fact, an insurgent one, and thus the war on terrorism is most accurately thought of as global counterinsurgency ("Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, August 2005, pp. 597-617).

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17. Nathan Vardy, "Outfront: Hezbolla's Hoard," *Forbes*, August 14, 2006, p. 46.

18. Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000.

19. Jack A. Goldstone *et al.*, "A Global Forecasting Model of Political Instability," paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, September 1-4, 2005.

20. This is not to suggest that decentralized networks will invariably be successful, but simply that they have some advantages over other types of organizations in the environment described.

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80. John F. Burns and Kirk Semple, "Iraq Insurgency Has Funds to Sustain Itself, U.S. Finds," *New York Times*, November 26, 2006, p. 1.

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83. Or so they thought. There are many instances throughout history of mercenaries turning on their employers.

84. Herbert M. Howe, "Private Security Forces and African Stability: The Case of Executive Outcomes," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, June 1998, pp. 308-309.

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87. On Angola, see Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, pp. 107-110; and Gerry Cleaver, "Subcontracting Military Power: The Privatisation of Security in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa," *Crime, Law, and Social Change*, Vol. 33, Nos. 1-2, March 2000, pp. 139-141. On Sierra Leone, see Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, pp. 110-115; and Deborah D. Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequence of Privatizing Security*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 82-98.

88. David J. Francis, "Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone: Providing National Security or International Exploitation?" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 20, No. 2, April 1999, pp. 319-338; and Howe, "Private Security Forces and African Stability," pp. 307-331.

89. Mariane C. Ferme and Danny Hoffman, "Hunter Militias and the International Human Rights Discourse in Sierra Leone and Beyond," *Africa Today*, Volume 50, Number 4, Summer 2004, pp. 74-78; Ero, "Vigilantes, Civil Defence Forces and Militia Groups," pp. 27-28.

90. Thomas K. Adams, "Private Military Companies: Mercenaries for the 21st Century," in Bunker, ed., *Non-State Threats and Future Wars*, p. 57. As with the Executive Outcomes activities in Africa, Sandline experienced problems as well, hitting political turmoil soon after arriving in Papua New Guinea. Mark Hemingway, "Warriors For Hire," *The Weekly Standard*, December 18, 2006, p. 27; and Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, pp. 191-196.

91. Francis, "Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone," p. 322.

92. See Avant, *The Market for Force*, pp. 98-113; and Steven Brayton, "Outsourcing War: Mercenaries and the Privatization of Peacekeeping," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2, Spring 2002, p. 310.

93. Rod Paschall, *LIC 2010: Special Operations and Unconventional Warfare in the Next Century*, Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1990.

94. James Dao, "Private Guards Take Big Risks For Right Price," *New York Times*, April 2, 2004, p. A1.

95. During a trip to Baghdad in April and May 2003, I noticed Gurkhas, South Africans, and many other nationalities I could not identify among the private security contractors in the "Green Zone."

96. Jeremy Scahill, "Bush's Rent-an-Army," *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 2007, p. A23. Where there's a market, there's a way: In February 2007, the author received an unsolicited email with the bold headline, "The leading opportunities for private security firms operating in Iraq now lie in Western-funded services on behalf of the Iraqi government."

97. Walter Pincus, "Security Contracts to Continue in Iraq," *Washington Post*, February 4, 2007, p. 19.

98. There are exceptions. In February 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives Oversight and Reform Committee took testimony from the family members of four Blackwater contractors killed in Fallujah in March 2004. The family members were highly critical of the U.S. military for, in their words, failing to provide adequate intelligence and equipment for the contractors. Paul Richter, "Subcontractor for Pentagon Criticized," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 2007, p. 14.

99. See *www.sandline.com/*.

100. Quoted in Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, New York: Penguin, 2006, p. 371. Hammes confirmed this account in a conversation with the author.

101. LTC Raymond Millen, email correspondence with the author, May 8, 2007.

102. General Peter Schoomaker, quoted in Nathan Hodge, "Army Chief Notes 'Problematic' Potential of Armed Contractors on the Battlefield," *Defense Daily International*, September 9, 2005, p. 1.

103. In Renaissance Italy when mercenary armies fought each other, battles were often nearly bloodless since mercenaries sought to get paid but not to die doing so. They often reneged on a contract when it appeared that they might take significant casualties.

104. Assis Malaquias calls diamonds the "African guerrillas' best friend." See "Diamonds Are a Guerrilla's Best Friend: The

Impact of Illicit Wealth on Insurgency Strategy," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2001, p. 311. Coltan is the African colloquial name for columbite-tantalite, a metallic ore used to produce tantalum for cell-phones, DVD players, personal computers, and games consoles. Coltan smuggling has fueled the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

105. Karen DeYoung, "Sunni-Shiite Fight Flares in Broadcasts," *Washington Post*, January 21, 2007, p. A18; Lawrence Pintak, "War of Ideas: Insurgent Channel Coming to a Satellite Near You," Los Angeles: University of Southern California Center for Public Diplomacy, January 10, 2007; Marc Santora and Damien Cave, "On the Air, the Voice of Sunni Rebels in Iraq," *New York Times*, January 21, 2007; and Sarah Gauch, "Why Is Egypt Airing Insurgent TV From Iraq?" *Christian Science Monitor*, January 17, 2007.

106. Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, working draft, April 26, 2006, p. 104.

107. The Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) Institute monitors many such sites (*www.siteinstitute.org/websites.html*).

108. Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War*, p. 103.

109. DeMars, "War and Mercy in Africa," p. 6.

110. For instance, "Ugandan Government Must Fulfill Its Responsibility to Protect Civilians in War-Torn North," Oxfam press release, October 27, 2005.

111. This point was made to the author by a senior military officer from Uganda in a March 2007 conversation, Carlisle Barracks, PA. David Shearer concludes that while there is anecdotal evidence that humanitarian assistance distorts or helps sustain internal wars, empirical evidence does not support the claim. David Shearer, "Aiding or Abetting? Humanitarian Aid and Its Economic Role in Civil War," in Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000.

112. Ben Barber, "Feeding Refugees, or War? The Dilemma of Humanitarian Aid," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 4, July/August 1997, pp. 8-14.

113. John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons From Malaya and Vietnam*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002, reprinted in paperback by the University of Chicago Press, 2005; and David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1964, reprinted 2006. Also popular is Galula's *Pacification in Algeria 1956-1958*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1963, reprinted 2006. Nagl is a U.S. Army officer who served multiple tours in Iraq after writing the book (which was derived from his Ph.D. dissertation). Galula was a French Army officer who based on his analysis on his own experience in Indochina, especially Algeria.

114. Jeffrey Record provides a powerful analysis of the role of outside sponsors in insurgency in *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, Washington, DC: Potomac, 2007. His analysis, though, deals with cases where another outside force is playing a significant role in the counterinsurgency effort—proxy conflict insurgency.

115. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Policy Research Working Paper* No. 2355, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000.

116. Ballentine and Sherman, "Introduction," in Ballentine and Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*, p. 3.

117. Paul Collier, "Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective," in Berdal and Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance*, p. 91.

118. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

119. Mats Berdal and David Keen, "Violence and Economic Agendas in Civil Wars: Some Policy Implications," *Millennium*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1997, p. 797.

120. McCormick and Giordano, "Things Come Together," p. 312.

121. David Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence," in Berdal and Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance*, p. 25.

122. Collier, "Doing Well Out of War," p. 107.

123. Ballentine and Sherman, "Introduction," in Ballentine and Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*, p. 3.

124. Collier, "Doing Well Out of War," p. 105.

125. James Fearon described and advocated such an approach in "Iraq's Civil War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 2, March/April 2007, pp. 2-15.

126. On "neo-trusteeships," see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Spring 2004, pp. 4-43; and Richard Caplan, "From Collapsing States to Neo-Trusteeships: The Limits of Solving the Problem of 'Precarious Statehood' in the 21st Century," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2007, pp. 231-244.